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25 June 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Conversation with Colonel Douglas Steakley,
USAF (JRC), Regarding Conduct of Cuba
Overflights by SAC-furnished U-2 Aircraft

REFERENCE : Memo for DDCI from AAD/SA dtd 25 Jun 62,
Subj: Status of Actions Taken to Date on
Project IDEALIST Support to China Crisis
[redacted]-62)

1. With regard to para. 1. e. of reference, which was one of the actions stemming from the Friday meeting of the USIB on the Communist China buildup, Colonel Steakley called me the afternoon of 25 June to say that he had been in touch with [redacted] USAF, Acting Chief, Operations Division, OSA, on the question of conversion training for an Edwards AFB pilot from J-75 to J-57 U-2's and that he could not agree with [redacted] request for this training for the following reasons:

a. Colonel Steakley said that the determination to use SAC U-2's from Del Rio against Cuba flown by CIA pilots had not been made at the USIB meeting. He said that he had checked with "the Air Force representative at the meeting" who reportedly substantiated his view.

b. In view of his interpretation of the conversation between himself and Mr. McCone on this subject, he said he could not utilize SAC to accept the responsibility for conducting this training. He added that, speaking for the JCS, their earlier offer, which, you will recall, he had stated at the meeting, whereby SAC itself would fly the Cuba missions with SAC pilots in USAF-marked aircraft, stood on the record as the DOD position.

USAF review(s) completed.

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2. In view of Colonel Steakley's reported interpretation of the conversation at USIB and my inability to refresh his memory with the facts, we have no other course at the moment but to cancel those plans which were forecast in para. 1. e. of the reference. Colonel Steakley admitted that he had pointed out to the Chairman of the USIB that were SAC to fly the Cuba missions in the manner he proposed, this would represent a major change in policy, but Colonel Steakley's view was that USIB was not the proper body to pass upon policy changes of this sort, rather the Special Group was the appropriate place for a determination to be made that SAC would furnish U-2's for Cuba in the same manner that they are now doing for China coverage in the Far East.

3. Lest I leave the impression that the reluctance of Colonel Steakley to support this requirement has reduced our Cuba capability to zero, I hasten to add that current expectations are that we will have a J-75 U-2 aircraft in commission again at Edwards AFB by the afternoon of 26 June, after which time the Agency can hopefully fulfill its commitment to complete another Cuba flight prior to the end of the month. However, we will not have the back-up capability we had hoped to have under the situation covered in the reference.

JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
Acting Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

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